United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- In report on UNAVEM II, Secretary-General tells Security Council he will proceed with planning to extend Organization's capability to support comprehensive settlement of conflict in Angola.

- Secretary-General, in report to Security Council, recommends that UNOMIL continue its work, though timetable for Liberian elections will probably not be met; says transitional government could be formed soon and elections could be held in first half of 1994.

- General Assembly, in resolution adopted without vote, emphasizes leadership role of Secretary-General, along with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in coordinating responses to humanitarian emergencies.

- Japan announces contribution of $16.5 million for UNRWA Peace Implementation Programme; described as first step in Japan's promised $200 million programme to aid Palestinians over next two years.

- Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament says its Chemical Destruction Group has completed large-scale destruction of Iraq's stock of mustard-agent-filled artillery shells; destruction of chemical agents expected to be completed by mid-1994.

- United Nations Compensation Commission, reviewing claims resulting from Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, begins final stages of examination of claims relating to death and serious personal injury; Governing Council to assess payments to be made from Compensation Fund.

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In a report on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) dated 3 December, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali told the Security Council that he would proceed with contingency planning to enable the Organization to contribute effectively to a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Angola. If negotiations in Lusaka between the Angolan Government

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and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) resulted in a sustainable cease-fire, the United Nations would immediately be called upon to deploy an additional contingent of military and police observers, as well as some other units. The expanded tasks that might have to be performed would would also eventually require a substantial presence of United Nations troop contingents there. However, he stressed, there was "no substitute for the genuine commitment of the Angolans themselves to peace and reconciliation".

The Secretary-General said it remained important to continue and even intensify humanitarian activities throughout Angola while the political negotiations in Lusaka continued. Those activities could contribute not only to the well-being of the population, but also to the maintenance of a climate favourable to a peaceful settlement. He appealed to all the parties concerned to facilitate the effective provision of such assistance.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) continue to implement its mandate, even though the election timetable established by the Cotonou Peace Agreement will probably not be met. When UNOMIL was created in September, the Security Council stipulated that its continuation beyond 16 December would depend on the progress made towards implementing the Agreement. In a report to the Council dated 13 December, the Secretary-General said that the original timetable for implementation had been "highly ambitious". Disarmament was to have begun within 30 days of the Agreement's signing last July, while elections were to have been held within seven months. Meanwhile, the joint peace-keeping mission involving UNOMIL and the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had been a complex undertaking.

The Secretary-General went on to say that disarmament would probably begin shortly, that a transitional government would soon be formed, and that elections could be held in the first half of next year. He stressed that the fundamental prerequisite for peace was that the leaders and people of Liberia faithfully implement the Cotonou Agreement. He also appealed to the international community to respond generously to the inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance to Liberia, to be issued later this month, to help the important relief and rehabilitation work being undertaken there.

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The General Assembly today adopted a resolution emphasizing the leadership role of the Secretary-General, along with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in coordinating a timely response to humanitarian emergencies. On an exceptional basis, and pending a final decision to be taken by the Economic and Social Council at its 1994 session, the Assembly authorized the Coordinator to draw from the interest earned by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, to enhance rapid response coordination where insufficient capacity existed at the field level.

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Acting without a vote on a draft introduced by Canada, the Assembly recognized the need to increase the resources available to the Fund and invited additional contributions from potential donors. It asked the Secretary-General to continue strengthening the consolidated appeals process and called upon States to respond quickly and generously to such appeals. It also stressed that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination.

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Japan has announced a contribution of $16.5 million for projects in the Peace Implementation Programme of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), "to improve living conditions for the Palestinian people, particularly housing in the occupied territory". Announcing the contribution today, the Japanese Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Vienna described it as the first step in implementing Japan's $200 million programme of assistance to Palestinians over the next two years, as pledged by Prime Minister Hosokawa at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

UNRWA launched its Peace Implementation Programme on 6 October and has already identified nearly 100 short-term projects worth some $100 million in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which could be implemented during the initial phase of the transition period. The Programme also includes projects to benefit Palestine refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali yesterday received a written request from Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for United Nations assistance in establishing a Palestinian Police Academy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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The Special Commission on the disarmament of Iraq said yesterday that its Chemical Destruction Group had completed the large-scale destruction of the country's stock of 155mm artillery shells filled with mustard agent. Between its inception in June 1992 and last Sunday, the Group had destroyed more than 12,000 such munitions at the Muthanna site. A few of those artillery rounds remaining at Muthanna were in such poor condition that they could not be destroyed in the usual manner of venting and draining. The Special Commission said that once a suitable alternative method had been found, the destruction of the shells would continue.

Chemical destruction activities will now focus on the destruction of the remaining agent (essentially tabun and mustard) and precursor chemicals, according to the Special Commission. It is envisaged that destruction and cleaning up activities will be completed by mid-1994, permitting the Chemical Destruction Group to withdraw from Iraq.

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The United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), which reviews compensation claims resulting from Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, today began the final stages of its examination of claims relating to death and serious personal injury. Based in Geneva, the UNCC is a subsidiary organ of the Security Council and has the same membership composition. The panel will have 120 days in which to present to the Commission's Governing Council its recommendations on the claimants' entitlements. The Governing Council is expected to be in a position to act on those recommendations by April 1994 and to order appropriate payments to be made to the claimants' Governments from the Compensation Fund.

In February next year, panels will begin work on two other categories of claims, namely those relating to individuals who left Kuwait or Iraq as a result of the invasion, and compensation claims for individual losses of up to $100,000. The awards issued are expected to go to tens of thousands of claimants from the 78 countries that have filed claims.

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